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BOOKS ISSUE SPRING

the moment" is how Lydon defines her quest) only to find a new set of traps on the other side — a prisoner of the expectations she created. The most telling portrait of all is that of Chuck Berry, a man who had come to live as almost an exile

Language is impaled on the point of its own indeterminacy, but for the big picture, "Wiping for Pleasure" must stand as the first and last word. Art, love and pro wrestling's golden quarter-century offer their fleeting consolations, *Gulcher* tells us, but grade-A toilet paper, now there's something important.

in the promised land his music laid claim to. But Lydon stumbles when he tries to explicate those symbolically charged polar opposites, the Grateful Dead and the Rolling Stones. The Dead piece is awestruck, embracing the band's cosmic pretensions too easily, and the undertone of creepy passivity only serves to remind of what doomed the then-thriving counterculture in the first place. The long Stones report, from the tour that took them to Altamont and the inevitable, is better, and yet a deeper failure. There's more at stake in the Rolling Stones' music, some intimation of the absolute that neither details of backstage tour politics nor unreserved fandom can hint at. There are nice bits in the piece (Abbie Hoffman visiting the Stones before a Chicago show: "Could you lend us some money for our trial? It's expensive making the revolution." Mick: "We got our own trials"), but there's a hole where the essence of the band should be: in their ability to implicate their audience in the chaos of the time.

The Rolling Stones absorbed the war in their music, made it into a free-floating subtext. "It's a gas, gas, gas" caught the horror and romance Vietnam held for the counterculture; the war entered rock culture as rock culture entered the war — as a source of horrific revelation and romantic violence. Resistance to the war became an extension of it, as opposition accrued pop glamour and the Viet Cong became faceless pinups fighting an American revolution by proxy.

The aftermath of Vietnam echoes through Laurence Gonzales' 1979 rock & roll novel *Jambeaux* like a good old Stones epigram: "And he said one word to me. And that was 'death.'" Page, the book's hero, comes home from the war with its sound in his head. How that noise gets translated into pop success is the tale Gonzales tells. Jambeaux, the group of misfits Page assembles to play his music, could pass for a shell-shocked version of the Band. Except instead of making metaphors — historical or otherwise — of America, Jambeaux embody the spiritual fallout of repressed history finding its way into every kind of ordinary act. The novel's sex, drugs, betrayals and violence all are informed by memories of conflict, buried rituals where fear and its celebration are one. This fuels *Jambeaux* even when the action turns predictable and the narrative (related in flashbacks from after the band has dissolved and Page has become a recluse) uncovers no event worthy of the ghost life Page carries inside himself. What one takes from the book is an image of a band behind enemy lines, past being able "to live within the bounds of accepted human behavior. You begin to take the spirits home with you. On the road — war or rock & roll — all possibilities are yours, and home is just a reduction of options."

Ray Mungo's *Famous Long Ago* is about the reduction of options as a form of enlightenment; it's an interminable exercise in consciousness-lowering. In reissuing this 1970 book about Mungo's perpetually dazed leadership of the Liberation News Service, Citadel Underground has incorporated its sequel from the same year, *Total Loss Farm* (the commune he founds after a typically imbecilic schism effectively ends the LNS), and his 1975 *Return to Sender* (a travelogue of his search for higher meaning in, naturally, the Far East). This latter volume is halfway decent; by then, Mungo's callowness has been tempered by a little curiosity of the world beyond his preconceptions, and his account of bumming through Japan and India has some anecdotal interest. Total loss, however, describes the first two volumes succinctly enough. There isn't much distance to travel from the hapless Liberation News Service (for Mungo, facts only get in the way of "truth," which is the sum of hippie sentimentality times the certitude that America is the source of all evil in the world) to the solipsism he pursues in and outside the commune in "Year One" of the New Age. Community is equated with disengagement, insight with dope smoking, spirituality with the ability to sneer at the Bible Belt while believing in mumbo jumbo that would shame Jim and Tammy Bakker.

While Mungo was dreaming of mass defections from the corrupt Old World to the trippy cosmic-organic lifestyle ("But the positive, new and forward aspects of the life are coming on strong now, and will exonerate us in the long run. I'm sure, from any accusation that we merely drew back without pushing upward as well"), Jane Alpert was part of a ragged cadre of radicals who thought the Establishment was ripe for violent overthrow. Her excellent 1981 memoir, *Growing Up*

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